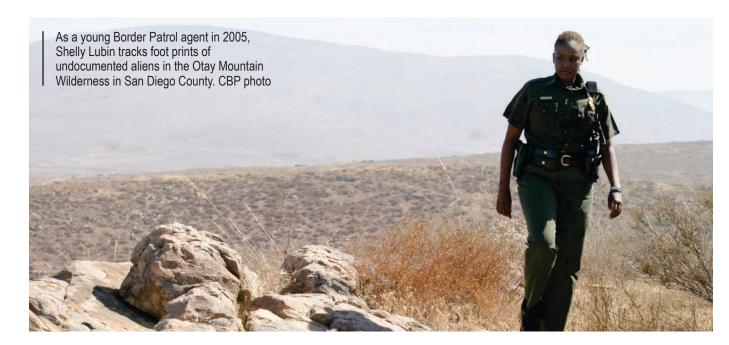


At the age of 9, Shelly Lubin wanted to be a police officer. By the time she was 13, she thought about joining the military, how it could help pay for school. But at no time did she ever consider becoming a Border Patrol agent. "I had never heard about the Border Patrol," said Lubin. "I had no idea what it was."

Lubin, who ultimately served eight years in the Navy and graduated with a criminology degree from Florida State University in Tallahassee, decided to apply at the FBI. It was one of the law enforcement agencies Lubin's college had listed to help students with their job search. Lubin applied, passed the first phase of testing, and then the FBI had a hiring freeze.

A few months later, 9/11 shook the nation. "I wanted to do something for my country," said Lubin, who thought about rejoining the Navy. But then, Lubin saw something in the newspaper. "There was a huge advertisement for the Border Patrol. I didn't ever remember hearing about the Border Patrol," she said.

Lubin did some research and found what she learned appealing. "I decided while I'm waiting to finish the FBI's hiring process, I'll apply for the Border Patrol," she said. Lubin applied and was hired. Soon after, she realized she wanted to stay. "I loved it," she said. "I've always liked being outdoors. I love getting in my truck, going out to my area and patrolling. I couldn't believe they were paying me to do this job."



That was 14 years ago. For the first 10 years of her career at U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Lubin was stationed in San Diego, patrolling the border. Today, she is an assistant chief at the U.S. Border Patrol headquarters in Washington, D.C. "I wanted to show the federal agents out in the field that if you work hard enough, you can advance in your career," said Lubin, who is one of the thousands of agents and officers at CBP who are protecting America.

At a time when federal hiring has slowed at many agencies, CBP is moving at full throttle to recruit new agents and officers to fill its ranks. Within the next few years, CBP will need to meet critical hiring needs for all its uniformed personnel. In January, President Trump issued an executive order calling for the hiring of an additional 5,000 Border Patrol agents. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kelly also issued a directive to add 500 Air and Marine agents. Both are in addition to filling a deficit of more than 1,300 CBP officers and 1,700 Border Patrol agents.

Filling the ranks

"It's a huge undertaking with many challenges, but we're making headway," said Michael Tucker, commander of CBP's National Frontline Recruitment Command, a division of CBP's Office of Human Resources Management, which is responsible for the agency's recruitment strategy and hiring efforts. Aside from these numbers, Tucker said he also needs to take the agency's attrition into account. "People retire and take other jobs based on many factors," he said. "The attrition numbers average around five percent for us right now, which





Commander Michael Tucker briefs the National Frontline Recruitment Command team at a weekly meeting in Washington, D.C. Counterclockwise from left: Richard Fortunato, Lillian Wang, Shirley Chen Barry, Kevin Wright, Rita Lott, Casey Adams, Michael Tucker, Sean Driscoll, and Charity Sperringer. Photo by Ozzy Trevino

is quite high. We need to hire almost 3,000 agents and officers annually for the next five years to attain our goals."

Tucker, who is a Border Patrol agent himself, said that CBP is using two basic recruitment methods. Online advertising and recruiting in person at job fairs, college campuses, and military bases where CBP recruiters work with transitioning veterans' programs. Last year, CBP conducted 4,407 recruiting events nationwide. "We're trying to do a better job of attracting more people to recruiting events so that prospective candidates can meet officers and agents and ask questions," said Tucker.

CBP also has taken steps to recruit on military bases. "We physically travel to military installations. We have one base, Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas, where we are co-located with military hiring personnel, and we're working toward similar arrangements with

five other military bases," explained Tucker. "This expedites the hiring process because we're right there. Applicants can see a CBP representative onsite who can answer questions, help them apply online, and talk to them about the benefits of CBP."

Furthermore, the National Frontline Recruitment Command has a special unit that focuses on hiring military veterans. "Military personnel have a special vernacular," said Tucker. "We wanted to train our forces to speak that language so we can attract the best candidates. Close to 30 percent of our workforce are veterans and we're proud of that number."

CBP's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 2016, employment websites, Monster and Military.com, ranked CBP as the No. 2 best employer for hiring and retaining veterans.

CBP also does a fair amount of recruiting on college campuses. "We have focused a lot on colleges and it hasn't attracted as many successful candidates as we had hoped. We think part of it is timing," said Tucker. "Our events were held first semester as opposed to second semester. We've realized that we need to reach students just prior to graduation." Tucker also explained that his team plans to establish more relationships with community colleges. "We want to reach students who have not yet decided which career path to take," he said.

From a geographical perspective, Tucker said that the majority of applicants and successful hires come from areas along the U.S. coastline and Southwest border. "We have not seen a great deal of applicants from the Northern border or the heartland of the U.S.," said Tucker, adding that CBP is now focusing its efforts on the Midwest, where there is an untapped pool of quality applicants.

Inspiring success story

Case in point is José Venegas, a supervisory CBP officer in Chicago who serves as the agency's liaison to federal, state, and local law enforcement partners. Venegas first learned about the U.S. Customs Service, one of CBP's legacy agencies, and its career opportunities when he was 17 years old and joined the Explorer Program, a law enforcement sponsored program for local area youth.

As a first generation American who was born in Guadalajara, Mexico, Venegas grew up in an immigrant neighborhood on Chicago's South Side, where the schools were bilingual and his classes were taught in Spanish. Not until he was exposed to the Explorer Program did he realize that he needed to learn how to communicate in English to get ahead. "I understood that if I wanted to go into federal law enforcement, especially into customs, communication needed to be a strength. Otherwise,



Supervisory CBP Officer José Venegas, center, inspires teenagers in the inner city of Chicago who are members of the CBP Explorer program, which educates youth about trending law enforcement issues. Photo by Natalie Uchmanowicz

I was going to be in big trouble. So I ended up overcoming my language barrier. I had to," he said.

At first, Venegas studied on his own. "I bought all of these books and taught myself how to read and write in English," he said. Then Venegas decided to go to school. "My parents didn't have the money to send me to college, so I worked summers at a car wash or I did landscaping," said Venegas, who initially enrolled at a community college in the city. After a couple of years, he transferred to DePaul University in Chicago. "I took a lot of tutoring and used every resource available," he said. In the end, Venegas earned straight A's in all of his English classes and graduated from DePaul University with high honors. His degree is in elementary education, but Venegas decided not to teach at a grammar school. Instead, he joined the U.S. Customs Service.

"I thought I would enjoy teaching people, talking to kids, but I wanted to do it in the law enforcement field. I just found it so intriguing working with the community, explaining what we do," said Venegas. Today, 23 years later, Venegas has risen through the ranks at CBP while continuing to be part of the Explorer Program, only now he's mentoring inner city kids as a CBP advisor, inspiring them to achieve their goals.

Rigorous hiring process

The hiring process for CBP officers and agents is rigorous. After submitting an application, candidates for CBP officers and Border Patrol agents take an entrance exam. "There isn't an entrance exam for Air and Marine pilots and boat captains because they've already received certification," said Tucker. "But they are required to do an aerial test flight or a test drive on a boat."

Qualified applicants are then asked to take a medical exam and a basic physical fitness test. For these phases, CBP offers reciprocity to veterans who have recently completed a military medical or fitness test.

At this point, applicants fill out documents to initiate a background investigation. CBP officer and Border Patrol agent candidates then undergo a

scenario-based interview conducted by a certified panel of officers and agents of various ranks. Air and Marine applicants go through different interview procedures at CBP's aviation and marine academies. If candidates successfully pass the interview, they are asked to take a polygraph. "If they pass the polygraph, candidates will undergo a background investigation," said Tucker. "After they pass the background investigation, applicants may be required to pass a random drug test before a final offer is extended. If they accept, the new hires will enter on duty and begin their careers with CBP."

One of the major challenges CBP faces is the length of time it takes to complete its hiring process. In 2015, it took an average of 469 days to bring potential candidates on board. The process in place today has shown the capacity to hire candidates in 160 days.

CBP sped up the process by establishing "hiring hubs," where many steps of the hiring process take place at one location during the course of a weekend. "We set up hiring hubs at military bases three times a year to process applicants' entrance

exams, conduct structured interviews, perform polygraph tests, provide adjudication, and grant provisional clearance," said Tucker.

"Our goal is to hire 100 percent of our applicants through a hiring hub," he said. "If we can do that, we can cut down the time it takes to process and hire applicants substantially, which is a great benefit to us. The talent pool isn't just applying for a job with CBP. If we aren't quick enough and reactive to their needs, then they're going to find employment somewhere else."

Recent legislation also has helped CBP expedite its hiring process. In December 2016, the National Defense Authorization Act was passed, waiving polygraph tests for veterans who already have an active Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information, or TS/SCI, security clearance when they are separating from their branch of service. Similarly, the Border Jobs for Veterans Act of 2015 gives reciprocity to certain veterans for physical fitness tests. "We are trying to make it easier for candidates to apply while maintaining our high standards," said Tucker.

Best recruiters

According to Tucker, CBP's best recruiters are the uniformed agents and officers. "They know the mission better than anyone else. They do it every day," he said.

"I was inspired to become a Border Patrol agent because I saw that agents care about what happens to people. They risk their lives to save people, not just apprehend them," said Casey Adams, a 22-year veteran of the U.S. Border Patrol who leads one of the National Frontline Recruitment Command teams. "They go through life every day with one mission—to make the world better for everyone else, not necessarily themselves. That's what I wanted to do. It was my calling."

CBP Officer Rita Lott's first encounter with customs was when she returned to the U.S. after taking a cruise. The ship had stopped at the ports along the Mexican coastline.

Instead, she was sent to secondary for further inspection.



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"It was my first trip overseas and when I came back, I was pulled out of line and sent to secondary. The CBP officers wanted to check my bags," said Lott. "I was wondering what I did wrong. Was I in trouble? Am I going to jail? I guess it was just a random check, but I was terrified," she said.

That's when Lott discovered the CBP officer who was searching her bags was kind. "She was really nice," Lott said. "I started asking her questions about her job and she told me how much she liked it."

After Lott returned home, she spoke to her brother about what happened and did a little research. "I didn't know anything about traveling overseas, so it piqued my interest," she said. Lott's brother noticed that there was a job posting online for CBP officers and told his sister to apply. But Lott, who has a degree in microbiology and was a consumer safety officer for the Department of Commerce at the time, decided to wait. Time passed and Lott's brother asked her if she had ever applied for the job at CBP. That got her thinking and eventually she did and was hired.

"Once I started working at CBP, I looked at all of the job opportunities that were available. There are so many things to do," said Lott, who now has been with CBP for 14 years and is a recruitment program manager. "Most people don't realize all the different duties that CBP officers have. When people travel overseas and return to the U.S., they know we ask them questions, but they don't realize that we check all the goods and services that come in from clothing to food to cars. Everything that crosses the border including the mail goes through CBP. The average person doesn't really understand the depth of our jobs, how many different things we actually are involved in."

Dreams taking flight

CBP is also a place where people fulfill their dreams. Such was the case for Todd Gayle, who knew he wanted to be a pilot since he was a sophomore in high school. "I wanted to fly, but I came from very humble means. I didn't have any money for college," said Gayle, who grew up in Wisconsin. "At the time, there was only one school in the entire state that offered a degree in aviation and it wasn't cheap. So I was kind of in a pickle."

Some of Gayle's college-bound friends suggested he enlist in the Army. They knew that the military offered money for college under the G.I. Bill. Gayle didn't want to make a career out of it though. He had set his sights on going to flight school and becoming a pilot. The Army recruiter told him that if he wanted to shorten his enlistment, he could take a combat position. So Gayle did.

"I drove tanks in the Army during the Iraq War," he said.

When Gayle was stateside, he
was stationed in El Paso,
Texas. There, he was
introduced to a Border
Patrol agent who offered

CBP Supervisory Air Interdiction Agent Todd Gayle locates smuggled marijuana hidden in the New Mexico desert. Photo by Ruben Reyes



Supervisory Air Interdiction Agent Todd Gayle, left, conducts a preflight briefing with Aviation Enforcement Agent Fabian Cardiel at CBP's El Paso Air Branch in El Paso, Texas. Photo by Ruben Reyes

to let him ride along so that Gayle could see what the Border Patrol did. That's when Gayle discovered that the Border Patrol had an aviation unit with a pilot training program. "When I heard that, I specifically set my goal to get into the program," said Gayle.

After he finished his tour with the Army, Gayle went back to Wisconsin to go to flight school. He graduated and, in 1996, was hired by the Border Patrol. "I spent 6-1/2 years as an agent on the ground before I was able to pick up a pilot slot," said Gayle. "There were a lot of people including family members that kept questioning if I was ever going to be a pilot. It would have been easy to be dissuaded from continuing that pursuit, but once I received my first pilot job, where I was getting paid to fly, I was like a kid on Christmas morning. When I first got my flight suit and gloves, I literally wore them around the house the whole day," he said.

Things have changed for current applicants. "There is a shortage of pilots now throughout the aviation industry," said Gayle, who is now a supervisory air interdiction agent in CBP's Air and Marine Operations. "Today, we do what we call 'street hires.' As long as a pilot can meet the hourly flight requirements, he or she can potentially come on board."



At CBP, Todd Gayle was able to fulfill his dream of becoming a pilot and flying multiple aircraft. Photo by Ruben Reyes

Since 9/11, CBP's primary mission is counterterrorism, along with facilitating safe, legitimate trade and travel across the U.S. borders. "Air and Marine Operations provides the maritime and aviation aspects of looking for human smugglers, drug smugglers, and people who are smuggling anything else that's illegal," said Gayle.

Furthermore, CBP's Air and Marine Operations work with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that request support. "If the president comes to town, we're going to be flying overhead to do countersurveillance," said Gayle. "We also provide security for events such as the Super Bowl or when the Olympics are in the U.S. So it's a very diverse mission set, which is one of the appeals of the job. Every day is different."

As a pilot, Gayle has achieved his highest ambitions too. "Through CBP, I've been able to realize my dreams of flying multiple aircraft," he said. "A lot of people in the military will fly one airframe or at the commercial airlines, maybe they'll fly two airframes, but I get to fly them all—little planes, big planes, jets, little helicopters, big helicopters—and I can have my pick of aircraft, depending on where I'm stationed."

CBP FOIA 003732





Volkswagen recently made history thanks in large part to U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

It's the sort of history the company likely never expected—earning the largest customs penalty ever, which cost the automaker \$4.3 billion in fines for fraudulently importing vehicles rigged to thwart U.S. emissions standards.

Volkswagen added a software package to thousands of its vehicles that modified the engine's exhaust when it detected the vehicle was undergoing an emission test. The scheme and the cover-up made international news in 2016. Meanwhile, six top Volkswagen executives await a court ruling on criminal charges for continuing the ploy that allowed the import of at least 590,000 vehicles over almost a decade.

Levied by CBP, the record penalty was part of a settlement with the agency, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Justice after Volkswagen pleaded guilty to criminal customs fraud.

CBP not only enforces customs laws and regulations, it enforces health, safety and border security violations for other government agencies.

The cover-up became the crux of the crime and why CBP played a major role in the outcome.

Trust is central in the way CBP regulates trade and expects importers to operate with integrity because of the massive volume of goods imported into the country every day.

"We can't look at everything," said Jerry Malmo, the Office of Trade's director of the Civil Enforcement Division. "We trust companies are good corporate

citizens and have good internal controls. This was quite a breach of that trust."

Volkswagen's blatant disregard for that principle was the driving force in CBP's strong stance for the huge penalty.

That bond was broken when "Volkswagen entities lied by submitting false information and omitting important information on importation," said Lesleyanne Koch Kessler, deputy associate chief counsel, enforcement and operations, for CBP's Office of Chief Counsel. "This was a border security issue. We need to know what's coming into our ports."

CBP first learned about the deception in September 2015, when the EPA cited the automaker for violating the Clean Air Act by not disclosing that numerous models—including Audi and Porsche—were equipped with "auxiliary emission control devices," software designed to defeat emissions tests. That would have required the company to report its own cover-up, an unlikely event.

On the road, the devices allowed engines labeled as EPA compliant, including the advanced technology vehicles the automaker touted as "green," to pollute way over the authorized limit. "Volkswagen claimed they had valid EPA certification on importation," Kessler said.

CBP immediately took custody of more than 16,000 fraudulently imported models, impounding them at ports of entry and other sanctioned areas throughout the country and launched an investigation to determine the scope of the violation.

It was an immense effort. Led by CBP's Automotive

and Aerospace Center of Excellence, experts from the Offices of Field Operations, Trade, and Chief Counsel formed a trade enforcement team that invested more than a year searching for evidence. Summonses were issued to Volkswagen importers to turn over customs entry documents. "We wanted to know what they knew," Kessler said.

The team spent countless hours reviewing thousands of records to determine how many vehicles were involved, the models and their combined value, factors that also contributed to the record fine.

Collaboration was central to the team's success, explained Lisa Wallace who directs the Automotive and Aerospace Center of Excellence and Expertise. All offices and divisions connected to the investigation pooled their resources, worked as a unit and communicated frequently through conference calls.

"We were efficient," she said. "This helped us to stay on track. We shared updates and talked together about steps to take next." The team approach was so effective it's now among the center's best practices and is being used on new cases under review, Wallace added.

Kessler called the group "an excellent example of interoffice coordination for enforcement."

Within the \$4.3 billion settlement, Volkswagen paid \$1.45 billion in civil penalties for customs and Clean Air Act violations and \$2.8 billion in criminal penalties.

Malmo said CBP stood prepared to litigate if the automaker refused to settle.

Volkswagen's membership in CBP trusted trader programs, which streamline the importing process, was revoked. The Office of Trade offers these benefits to importers who can show their supply chains are secure. Volkswagen would need to reapply for those privileges.

"The Volkswagen settlement sends a powerful message to importers around the world," said Scott Falk, CBP's chief counsel. "If you violate our customs laws and breach our trust, you'd better be prepared to pay a heavy price."

CBP FOIA 003733

AROUND THE AGENCY

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NEW BORDER PATROL CHIEF TAKES CHARGE



By Jayna Desai

Ronald D. Vitiello never rode a horse until he joined the U.S. Border Patrol.

Growing up in a suburb of Chicago, and also in San Diego, he knew more about hot rods and baseball than saddles and spurs; more about walking beautiful beaches than the streets of Laredo. The only peripheral connection? His childhood game of "Cowboys and Indians."

It's been more than 30 years since newly sworn-in Vitiello first put on a green uniform and entered on duty as a U.S. Border Patrol agent in 1985, as a member of Class 174.

He now leads one of the most important law enforcement organizations in the world. The Border Patrol, under its parent agency of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, secures the nation's borders across 6,000 miles of Mexican and Canadian international land borders and 2,000 of coastal waters surrounding the Florida Peninsula and the island of Puerto Rico.



"This type of work always interested me," said Vitiello. "My dad's older brother was in World War II as part of the Army's celebrated 10th Mountain Division. He was a Chicago police officer when I was a kid. I was fascinated by all of the gear, the stories and the symbolism. His life's work definitely made an impact on my decision and fueled my passion."

Vitiello was born on July 30, 1963, in Addison, Illinois, to Robert and Regina Vitiello. He is a middle child with one older brother and one younger sister. Vitiello is the son of a first generation father whose parents came from Italy. His mother and her family moved to the U.S. from Lithuania. In 1977, he and his family moved from Addison to San Diego following his freshman year of high school because his father worked with United Airlines, which was expanding to Southern California.

After high school, Vitiello enrolled at Grossmont Community College in San Diego and studied law enforcement. He met a former assistant chief from the San Jose, California, Police Department who

worked at the college and encouraged him to apply for a role with the Border Patrol. He helped the 21-year-old navigate through the recruiting process leading to the position that changed his life.

It was in the Laredo Sector of Texas that Vitiello began his Border Patrol career. Since then, he and his family weaved their way across the country, through Texas, Arizona and Vermont; and, through the cities of Laredo, Dallas, Nogales, Swanton, McAllen, Mexico City and Washington, D.C.

"I saw the work that the Border Patrol did in the media while living in San Diego, but when I got to Laredo, it was a completely different culture," Vitiello said. "It's a change in lifestyle rather than just some job that you have. And it was important for me to learn the Spanish language as well. Because everybody in town knows who you are and what you do, being able to speak Spanish influences every interaction in Laredo that you have."

Before starting his career, Vitiello told his friends and loved ones he had no plans to leave San Diego. That the only way he would take a job with the Border Patrol is if he were stationed close to home. Much to his mother's astonishment, his feelings quickly changed once the official acceptance letter came. The move proved to be momentous, both professionally and personally. Vitiello met his wife, Nuri, in Laredo in 1986. He considers her to be an incredible

support system in his life. They have been married for 29 years and have two children. Their daughter, Alexis, 24, graduated from James Madison University with an English major and creative writing minor. She is currently an au pair in Paris, France. Their son, Ron Jr., 20, is currently attending the International Culinary Center in New York.

"We met through a mutual friend when I was attending Laredo Junior College and he was a Border Patrol agent," Nuri said. "Even though I grew up in the border town of McAllen, Texas, I had no idea what the Border Patrol did or was until I met Ron."

Despite the complexities of the role, and knowing that she might have to follow her husband to other parts of the country as part of his duties, Nuri knew she wanted to marry Vitiello. She said she was comfortable making the required sacrifices, knowing the importance that he placed upon serving his

Ron is my best friend," Nuri, 52, said. "We love spending time together and enjoy just sitting out on our deck, having a drink, and talking. I am in awe of the father and husband he is. To this day, my kids nor my husband can remember a birthday, holiday, or special event he was not able to attend. I never complained to my kids about their dad's work. I made it very clear we were lucky to have a father that worked hard so we could enjoy a comfortable life."





"Ron and I talked about how important it was for our kids to have some stability and as a stayat-home mom, this would be the one thing that was consistent in their lives," Nuri said. "Since my parents were business owners, this was not a life I was used to, but I understood why my husband wanted this for our family. And so did I."

From the first day she met him, Nuri could see how much Vitiello invested in the Border Patrol and because he always gave the organization his best, he did not mind moving from state to state and working long hours. She believes this is the right time for him to become chief and the right thing for the entire Border Patrol family.

Erica Aguilar has known Vitiello and Nuri for six years and considers them close friends. Her husband, Border Patrol Agent Luis Aguilar, was killed in the line of duty on Jan. 19, 2008. Though Vitiello did not know her husband personally, she said he remembers the day her whole family, as well as the Border Patrol family, was notified of her husband's death.

"I've had many special moments with the Vitiellos," Aguilar said. "The last thing that my daughter, Arianna, did with her dad was learn how to ride a bike. She always hesitated to get back on a bike

again after his death, but Ron helped her overcome her fear. He was so patient with Arianna and was right there by her side, constantly reassuring her. I have complete faith in him as chief because he is genuine and inspirational. He knows the way of a Border Patrol agent so he can show the way to 21,000-plus agents."

CBP Acting Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan shares the same sentiment. He has known Vitiello for 14 years and describes him as "a tremendous law enforcement leader" who brings a wealth of experience to the position.

"He has done it all," McAleenan said. "From starting as a frontline agent in Laredo and progressing through the ranks, representing CBP at the Department of Homeland Security, serving as a chief patrol agent in Rio Grande Valley, and serving as deputy and acting chief of the Border Patrol at headquarters. No one could be more prepared for this critical role at this key moment. Under Ron's stewardship, we will have significant opportunities to continue to enhance our mission effectiveness and support our agents in the field."

Vitiello said one of his top priorities as chief is to address the concerns that Border Patrol employees expressed through the recent Human Capital Study.

"We have our share of difficulties, but people should have absolute clarity when it comes to our mission," he said. "Employee contributions and ideas are important and I intend to provide our workforce with the information, tools, and support they need to succeed at their jobs. I want to empower our employees through the voice I have at headquarters.'

Border Patrol Chief of Law Enforcement Operations Directorate Scott Luck, who has worked in the organization for almost 31 years, believes Vitiello is an ideal choice to move Border Patrol's agenda forward. He and Vitiello first met in the early 1990s when they were detailed as instructors for driver training at the Border Patrol Academy in Artesia, New Mexico.

"Chief Vitiello is the best selection in the country for this position," Luck said. "His breadth of knowledge with particular subject matters is extensive, having been a Border Patrol agent trainee and going through the ranks and serving his time with each one of those positions. He brings a lot of credibility to his leadership style. And he's just genuinely a good person. I believe in him. I wouldn't be here if I didn't."

Vitiello realizes there are challenges ahead. But, with the support of his family and friends, he is ready for them. He lists capacity building and working with foreign partners as some of Border Patrol's greatest achievements.

Some of the biggest challenges? Attrition, hiring, and how President Trump's proposed border wall will change communities. The nation's immigration laws will also remain in the spotlight.

"We execute our mission within the framework and the policies that are given to us, either through the law, our own developments, or through priorities of the executive branch," Vitiello said. "But in order to fulfill this mission, people must trust us. Most agents approach undocumented border crossers with a high degree of compassion. We're the first ones that these individuals see on their journey and we're the ones responsible for their well-being and safety. I don't think the public understands how agents are often put in a place where they do heartfelt things."

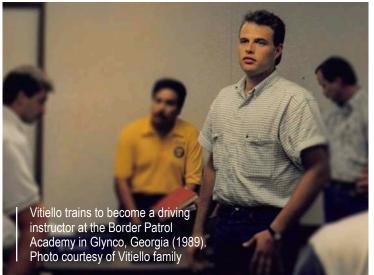
Vitiello said he is proud to be a part of Border Patrol and accepts the responsibility that comes with its leadership.

"I've been blessed in this career and have no regrets," he said. "Sure, I would like to make us better and have tried to do the best I could everywhere. But overall, the focus should remain on providing substantial protection and security at and between the ports, as well as having the capability to know what is happening, and to respond appropriately. The Border Patrol has had a long and storied history. Today, we are adding a new chapter and I am excited to be a part of its future."

Editor's Note:

Following the President's appointment of Randolph D. ("Tex") Alles as Director of the U.S. Secret Service April 25, Acting Commissioner McAleenan announced that Ronald D. Vitiello will serve as Acting Deputy Commissioner until a permanent selection is made. Carla Provost will serve as Acting Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol.









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The state of the s WALL MOVING AHEAD WITH CBP'S EXPERTISE

By Paul Koscak

U.S. Customs and Border Protection is driving the effort to design and construct a wall along much of the Southwest border with Mexico. The wall will be part of a comprehensive security barrier that includes lighting, cameras, sensors, other related technologies and all-weather roads.

The project fulfills President Donald Trump's executive order to achieve operational control of the southern border by improving border security and immigration enforcement. CBP's Office of Facilities and Asset Management has moved forward with a request for contractors to submit designs and prototypes for consideration, which generated a robust response.

Once contractors are selected, CBP will have them construct multiple prototypes--some made from reinforced concrete, others from unspecified materials designed to deter illegal U.S. entry. The prototypes, some potentially as high as 30-feet, will be constructed this summer in the San Diego Sector.

The structures will guide CBP in identifying the best materials, building methods and final designs before investing substantial money into the project, according to Karl Calvo, assistant commissioner for CBP's Office of Facilities and Asset Management. "Plans call for no more than eight and no less than four" prototypes, he said, noting the arrangement gives CBP a try-before-you-buy advantage and an opportunity to evaluate the wall prototypes in actual field conditions.

Prototypes must meet U.S. Border Patrol requirements and withstand "destructive testing," Calvo said. That means Border Patrol agents will test the wall's resistance. They will use power tools and other methods they expect border crossers to employ to break through the barrier. Photo by Glenn Fawcet **CBP FOIA 00373**

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"Border security is critically important to the national security of the United States. Aliens who illegally enter the United States without inspection or admission present a significant threat to national security and public safety," President Trump stated in his order, addressing one of the administration's top priorities.

The president further stated the border barrier, "supported by adequate personnel along with added technology aims to prevent illegal immigration, drug and human trafficking and acts of terrorism." In meeting that goal, CBP is committed to hiring an additional 5,000 Border Patrol and more than 500 Air and Marine agents without reducing hiring and training standards.

"I've seen its impact and its effect on border security," said CBP Acting Deputy Commissioner Ronald Vitiello, on the improved barrier system during a recent visit to the Laredo Sector in Texas. "It will help agents be better prepared and safer, and it will reduce a lot of traffic that comes from the south."

While the barrier may impact some communities, Acting Deputy Commissioner Vitiello noted the end result is a safer border. "That's a good thing for Mexico and that's a good thing for us."

Loren Flossman, the director of the Border Patrol & Air and Marine Program Management Office (PMO) within the Office of Facilities and Asset Management, leads a team that will oversee construction, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and make final decisions, Calvo explained.

"The PMO will leverage lessons learned from the Pedestrian Fence 225 and Vehicle Fence 300 projects," said Flossman, tasks that installed steel fencing and crossed steel planks as road barriers. "We've retained the appropriate subject matter expertise and institutional knowledge to move forward swiftly in meeting USBP's operational requirements and administration priorities."

CBP has long been involved in building border infrastructure. CBP maintains 705 miles of barrier. The border infrastructure is a mix of walls, pedestrian fencing, vehicle barriers, operational roads and lighting, depending on topography, operational requirements and other factors.





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